



To:
Cllr. Emlyn Dole
Chair of the ERW Joint Committee

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**

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Date: 17 December 2020

Dear Councillor Dole

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group – 26 November 2020

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank Gareth Morgans, Ian Altman and Greg Morgan for attending our meeting, for presenting the information we requested and answering our questions. I am writing to you to reflect on the views from that meeting.

We were pleased to hear about the positive support ERW has provided the region over recent months, particularly in terms of online as well as blended learning and the sharing of good practice. It was pleasing to note that take-up of online training resources had been well-received by school leaders and teachers and we felt that this form of support should be taken forward and developed further in any new regional model.

We discussed the potential future model/s of ERW, including the concept of commissioning activities. We feel that those Local Authorities that will make up the core of any future joint agreement should not necessarily be left out of pocket in terms of setting up of central and ongoing core costs when potentially providing commissioning services to other Local Authorities. It was felt that any local authority commissioning services from a future regional consortia should pay a fair amount for the services, which should contribute towards meeting the core costs of any new regional body.

We would like to see some clarity concerning what substantial changes to any future Joint Committee or framework, one based on the City Deal footprint for example, would have on the core ERW team and core ERW budgets. We would also like to understand whether it will deliver the sort of saving that some Local Authorities like Neath Port Talbot and Ceredigion have asked for. We recognise that 90% of the current ERW funding does go directly to schools but would like to know how any future consortium would increase that. Failure to increase the percentage and level of direct funding to schools would surely fail to satisfy 'value for money' claims which have been put

forward previously. We would be interested in understanding how moving from a 6 member consortium, to possibly a smaller consortium can deliver that.

We would like to see the evidence base for any new proposals so we can understand the key motivation, with a clear focus on school improvement. We were told that a lessons learnt piece of work is currently underway, which will outline the challenges that have faced the ERW consortium. We would welcome sight of this once it is available.

Given that this agenda is fast moving and uncertain, the Group agreed that we may call an additional meeting over the coming months, in order to contribute to the discussions around the development of any new model. Early receipt of the lessons learnt review will therefore be pivotal, and appreciated.

We look forward to your reply giving your thoughts on the contents of our letter.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Darren Price
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